



CG's Cup | Basketball

It's heartbreak city for MWSS-372

■ Diamondbacks start season 0-2 after two stomach-wrenching defeats

RICHARDSON MIRON
SPORTS EDITOR

You've got to feel a tad bit sorry for coach Jaymes Roedl and his Marine Wing Support Squadron 372 Diamondbacks.

The basketball squad's opening week of action presented the kind of adversity some teams never rebound from.

ACU-5
41
MWSS-372
32

First, the Diamondbacks were destroyed in the season opener by Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base. Then, just two nights later, they coughed up a ballgame against Assault Craft Unit 5 that was theirs for the taking.

It would be easy for the Diamondbacks to crumble like

See Heartbreak, Page C4



WAYNE SHORT

ACU-5's Gabriel Dorsey powers his way to the hoop against MWSS-372.

New Fieldhouse receives praise

RICHARDSON MIRON
SPORTS EDITOR

They say first impressions are everything. If that's the case, then the new 11 Area Semper Fit Fieldhouse passed with flying colors during the first week of the intramural basketball season.

"This place is unbelievable," varsity sports coordinator Chris Crawford said emphatically on March 2, the league's opening night, which came a day after the new gym's grand opening.

"I think we could move the (Los Angeles) Lakers' practices here. It's a state- of-the-art gym. And there is no doubt the Marines deserve a gym like this. They work hard, they play hard, and they should have a state-of-the-art facility like this."

For Crawford, a former basketball playing legend here at Camp Pendleton, the now-demolished 13 Area Gym known as The Pit will always be a memorable facility. In fact, Crawford was given a piece of the hardwood floor from the old gym as a keepsake.

But Crawford admits this new gym is like a whole

See Fieldhouse, Page C4

CG's Cup | Road Race



PHOTOS BY JOHN RAIFSNIDER

Bicycle riders from the men's 20-24 age division race along Las Pulgas Road Saturday morning during the first leg of the CG's Cup Bike Road Race.

ROAD WARRIOR

Repeat champion dedicates win to ailing friend

JOHN RAIFSNIDER
FOR THE SCOUT

After winning Saturday's Bike Road Race at the 43 Area, San Clemente's Mike Morrill said his mind wasn't totally focused on attacking every turn or hill on the 27-mile course.

Morrill, 39, instead was thinking of his friend and fellow rider, Don Edwards — also a former winner of the Bike Road Race — who was home recuperating from injuries suffered in a riding accident in January.

From the outset of the race, Morrill was focused on winning. But it took a Herculean effort over the final quarter-mile to beat three other riders to the finish line and claim the overall ti-

tle.

Morrill's winning time was 1:09:34, 38 seconds behind his top clocking last year.

"Several weeks ago, (Edwards) was involved in an accident while on a training ride. He collided with another rider head-on —they didn't see each other coming — and he broke the C-6 vertebrae in his neck," Morrill said of his longtime friend.

"He's home from the hospital and he's going through rehab right now, and the doctors expect him to make a full recovery, but it's going to take some time. He obviously couldn't make it here today, but we're thinking of him, and I'm dedicating this race and this win to him."

"The doctors don't expect him to make a full recovery. ... He obviously couldn't make it here today, but we're thinking of him."

Mike Morrill
Winning bicyclist speaking of injured friend



To claim his first title here, Morrill had to keep pace with the top-20 riders in his group, then make a break for the finish line with scarcely a quarter mile left in the race.

"There (were) about 80 guys in our group,

See Road Race, Page C2

Softball issues resolved at meeting

■ Roughly 15 teams expected to contend during season that will debut interdivisional All-Star Game

RICHARDSON MIRON
SPORTS EDITOR

Heated discussion filled the room on several occasions March 3 at the intramural softball league's preseason meeting. There was lively debate regarding several issues such as the league's batting order rules, softball bat regulations and team waiver-request restrictions.

But sports coordinator Chuck Pearce and the coaches on hand settled the topics of concern and the league is now ready to roll for the season opener on Monday.

"We were able to solve some of the issues and we're going to have a great season," Pearce said after the meeting outside the new 11 Area Semper Fit Fieldhouse.

"We want everyone to give us feedback. That (debate) is exactly what I was hoping for, so now everybody will be on the same page."

After the meeting, the only question remaining for the upcoming season is just how many teams will participate? Pearce said he was giving teams until Friday to sign up and was expecting about 15 squads for the round-robin season, which should last six to eight weeks depending on the final number of units registered.

"We always have 30-plus teams in softball, so the numbers are definitely down," Pearce said. "But it's because of the deployments. I think it will make the league (go) at a little faster pace. ... But it's good. I think with 15 or 16 teams we're going to

See Softball, Page C3



David DeCoste, 9, looks out over the new ballfield Saturday during the Padres' open house at Petco Park.

DANIEL RAIFSNIDER

Padres open up gates for sneak peek at brand-new Petco Park

RICHARDSON MIRON
SPORTS EDITOR

SAN DIEGO — Young children could hardly contain their excitement Saturday as they ran up and down the brand-spanking-new aisles at Petco Park.

And this was just the new park's Open House.

■ Little Padres Park at Camp Pendleton opened Saturday and youngsters enjoyed Opening Day. See results. **Page C2.**

Imagine the excitement that is guaranteed to fill the air when a game is actually being played on the new field.

The Padres gave military families an "early

See Padres, Page C2



Road Race

From Page C1

and you have to stay with the first 20 in the group or you'll just get left behind. That group of 20 became a group of 10, and then finally it was just the four of us," Morrill said.

"At the last corner, I was fourth, but then I turned it on and out-sprinted the rest of the guys to the finish. It was quite a run for all of us."

Dustin Whitson won the men's 20-24 age group in much the same fashion, by separating himself from the bulk of the other riders. Whitson's time was 1:11:44.

"There were six of us that kind of got away from everyone, and when there was about three miles left in the race, I got about a hundred-yard lead on a couple of guys and then pulled away," said Whitson, who last raced here three years ago and praised the change in venue to the 43 Area from Del Mar Beach.

"This is a great race; it's very challenging for a race of this distance," said Whitson.

"I rode this race in 2001 when it was down by the beach, and this is a much better layout. You don't have to deal with as many cars and really sharp turns.

"This setup is much better. A lot of the racers I've talked to prefer

this course to the old one."

Camp Pendleton Triathlon team member Rob Kruger also had good things to say about the course change.

"Since they've changed the course, and added some of the hills, this has become a great workout for us," said Kruger, one of 10 team members who took part.

"This course is more challenging. It's also better because you miss having to deal with the Del Mar Beach area — it's much safer. The new way they start the race is better, too. Since they start the race in (groups), that makes the race that much safer because there is some amount of separation from the wave in front or behind you. You're riding with people who are better matched to your level of riding."

There weren't any riders in the women's division who could challenge two former Ironman champions. Both Heather Fuhr, who won the event for the second straight year, and the runner-up this year, Paula Newby-Fraser, blitzed the field. Fuhr (1:18.32) won a close race by agreement.

"I just nipped her at the end by a wheel, but we made a deal before the race that she would let me win," admitted Fuhr.

"We knew that we had a lead with about four miles left, and that if we stayed together, we'd pull away

from everybody, and that's what we did."

Newby-Fraser confirmed the terms of the pact.

"She won this race last year, and since I'm not doing the (half) Ironman next month, I thought I'd just push her a little bit, but still let her win," said Fraser, who boasts a litany of full-ironman titles, including several at the most-famous ironman of all in Hilo, Hawaii.

"There wasn't anybody that could keep up with us —we were toying with them for a while, just to keep them interested. If somebody had started to catch us, we could have out-sprinted them, but with the pace we kept, nobody was going to catch us."

Event organizer Jim Duckworth of the Marine Corps Community Services' Race Series Office was pleased with how things went for the first race on the 2004 calendar.

"This has been great. We've had beautiful weather and everything has gone very smooth," Duckworth said gleefully.

"We have well over 400 riders and everyone seems to be enjoying themselves. This is a much safer race for the riders because we've taken three dangerous areas out of the race, and the participants really seem to appreciate that change. Overall, this has been a terrific day for a race."

Top military finishers included



JOHN RAIFSNIDER

Dustin Whitson won the men's 20-24 age division on Saturday at the Road Race.

the following:

■ Sam Dumcum (Headquarters Company, 1st Marine Regiment), who won the ages 19-24 group in 1:13:33.

■ Tim Tapply (Marine Corps Air Station Miramar), who won the ages 25-29 group in 1:12:39.

■ Stephen Armes (School of Infantry) and Philip Giarraputo (Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base), who finished second and third, respectively, in the ages 30-34 group.

■ Mac Jennings (SOI), who fin-

ished third in the ages 25-29 group.

■ George Rudinski (Assault Craft Unit 5) and Rick Jones (Security Bn.), who finished second and third, respectively, in the ages 35-39 group.

■ Gary Labbs (Field Medical Service School) and Jon Lee (I Marine Expeditionary Force), who finished first and second, respectively, in the ages 40-44 group.

■ Heidi McKenna (Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity), who finished tops among military females in 1:26:14.

Youth Standouts

Camp Pendleton Little League at Little Padres Park Saturday's results

Under-6 Division

Marlins vs A's
Marlins: Jacob Lopez & Jacob Mendel..

Mariners vs Padres
Mariners: Noah Alvarez & Jakob Bye. Padres: Shayle Wallace & Joey Bray.

Under-8 Division

Rangers vs Twins
Rangers: Isaiah Tyson & Christian Lopez. Twins: Mark Fuson & Maxwell Renforth.

Marlins vs D'Backs
Marlins: Darian Jackson & Marcus Brown. D'Backs: Emma Grubb & Henry Merridith.

Angels vs Mariners
Angels: Henry Anna & Christopher Patterson. Mariners: Anthony Martinez & Alejandro Dill.

Padres vs A's
Padres: Angelica Gonzales & Ian Brandt.

Coach Pitch

Mariners vs Braves
Mariners: Alexis Bornfleth & Nick Skidmore.

A's vs Angels
A's: Christopher Villalpando & Taylor Martin.

Majors

Padres 20, Braves 0
Padres: Nicole Torres & Dylan Rhodes.

Mariners 11, Marlins 1
Mariners: Zachary Barger on & Natalia Ybarra. Marlins: Brad West & Patience Cannon.

Other results

Angels 10, Phillies 2

A's 22, Yankees 0

Camp Pendleton Youth Soccer at 11 Area Soccer Field Saturday's results

Under-6 Division

Blazing Glory vs Silver Bullets
Blazing Glory: Jacob Shiflett & London Christopher. Silver Bullets: David William & Jalen Ettson.

Raptors vs FG (tm 2)
Raptors: Anthony Lew & Donte Harrington.

Pirates vs Orange Crush
Pirates: Riley Schultz & Alexandra Estrella.

Wolverines vs. Bumble Bees
Wolverines: Luis Rivera & Lauren Skalniak. Bumble Bees: Garrick Arias & Brian Kerl.

Under-8 Division

Mighty Thunderbolts vs Green Knights
Mighty Thunderbolts: Joshua De-long & Jordan Massey. Green Knights: Hanna Andrus & Johnathan Noel.

Tigers vs The Spikes
Tigers: Zayden Clark & Mickenon Adams. The Spikes: Nathan Kirby & Jordan Frausto.

Green Dragons vs Patriots
Green Dragons: Kellye Springstead & Morgan Liggan. Patriots: Tim Buhl & Gianna Vanderplas.

Cheetahs vs Geckos
Cheetahs: Skylar Franklin & Callie Crist. Geckos: Ryley Calhoun & Collin Throesh.

Under-10 Division

Icers 3, Stingers 2
Icers: Kelsey McLean & Avery Dominguez. Stingers: Dominique Revert & Thiem Galvez.

Komodos 2, Hurricanes 2

Komodos: Dante Gilliam & Christo-

pher Childers. Hurricanes: Austin Payne & Justin Magallon.

Ruff Riders 4, Stuart Mesa 4
Ruff Riders: Zackary Roybal & Jacob Sanchez.

Warlords 5, Rockets 2
Warlords: Josue Renteria & Kennedy Mella. Rockets: Tyler Justo & Christopher Carlisle.

Tornados 4, Mainside 3
Tornados: Molly Hertz & Cailleigh Rosen.

Sabertooths 2, Hornets 1
Sabertooths: Gabby Jansen & Tyrah Mayas. Hornets: Joey Hoak & Cody Young.

Icers 3, Stingers 2
Icers: Kelsey McLean & Avery Dominguez. Stingers: Dominique Revert & Thiem Galvez.

Under-13 Division

Blue Tsunamis 7, Strikers 0
Blue Tsunamis: Vicky Barrera & Eric Pierson. Strikers: Blake King & Aleishia Prince.

Vipers 3, Subzeros 0
Vipers: Richard Lane & Christain Hanner. Subzeros: Taylor Snyder & Rafael Martinez.

Fizzle 6, Sharpshooter 0
Sharpshooters: Justin Simokat & Hanna Rosheck. Fizzle: Anthony Dickson & Christina Manzanares.

Electric Storm 11, Leopards 1
Leopards: Luke Calhoun & David Crose. Electric Storm: Mitch Shibley & Andrea Frick.

Under-19 Division

Mainside 7, Rotten Banannas 0
Rotten Banannas: Alex Heimer & Kyle Schuster.

Nemesis 4, Blurrs 3
Nemesis: Mack Lethin & Eric Purdy. Blurrs: Farr Marcos & Kayla Mercer.



JOHN RAIFSNIDER

Riley Reece of the Angels unloads a pitch at Little Padres Field, where the 2004 Camp Pendleton Little League baseball season began Saturday morning.

Padres

From Page C1

bird" invitation to have the first peek at the downtown baseball-only ballpark last weekend. More than 200 active-duty personnel and their dependents took advantage of the opportunity to get an up-close-and-personal look at what the city of San Diego will be buzzing about when the Major League Baseball season starts in April.

"I absolutely love it," said Ed Jack, who is stationed at 32nd Street with Destroyer Squadron 7. "When I was a kid, I worked at Tigers Stadium selling hot dogs. I loved it there, but I have to say, these ballparks have come a long, long way."

The Padres' new facility figures to be a hit. Not only is it placed in the heart of the rejuvenated downtown area, but it delivers oodles of charm — like the Western Metal Supply Building in left field and the Park at the Park behind the center field batter's eye — that makes Petco Park truly unique.

"This is a great ballpark," said Stephen DeCoste, who is stationed at the Navy Fleet Training Center. "We've got tickets on the third-base line and up above. I think this is the perfect spot for baseball. It's the perfect location."

The Padres consider themselves "the team of the Navy and Marine Corps," and to prove it they are offering military discounts on individual game tickets for the 2004 season

to all eligible MWR/MCCS patrons at the Petco Park box office with a valid military identification card. There will be no military discount vouchers sold through MWR or MCCS ticket offices in 2004.

To receive military discounts, for a group of 25 or more, the tickets must be purchased through the Padres group sales office.

The Padres will hold their annual Military Opening Day on April 15. The Friars will wear their camouflage jerseys as a salute to the armed services. There are 5,000 special half-price tickets available at the park's box office.

The regular military discount will apply when the 5,000 specially priced tickets are sold.

Little Padres Park opens

The Padres are in the new ballpark business. Not only are they opening up their own new facility, but thanks to their generosity, Camp Pendleton's youth sports department has opened up the new Little Padres Park, located at the field formerly called Wire Mountain Field.

Youth sports coordinator Richard Smith said more than 1,000 people were on hand throughout the day Saturday to watch the Little League's Opening Day at the newly renovated field.

"It was the first time anyone played on the new park and it was a great day," Smith said. "The kids were very excited to be the first to play on the field. ... The park makes the kids feel like a real team. The old field needed a lot of work, but this field really makes the kids feel like little pros."

Golf tryouts for varsity golf

All Camp Pendleton-based military personnel are eligible to try out for the Camp Pendleton varsity golf team Saturday and Sunday and March 20 and 21 at the Marine Memorial Golf Course.

Tryouts will be from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Prospects must play all four rounds.

The top seven men and top woman will make the starting team, which plays other military teams around Southern California.

The season begins in April.

For more information, call Gunnery Sgt. Mike Lay, 725-2658, or e-mail layjm@pendleton.usmc.mil.

Scramble golf event coming

Anyone can sign up for the Medical Service Corps Scramble Golf Tournament Friday. The format is best-ball with four people per team. First tee is 12:30 p.m.

The fee, including cart, is \$25 for E-5 and below, \$33 for E-6 to O-3, \$40 for O-4 and above, \$41 for DoD civilians and \$46 for guests.

Prizes will be offered for first through third place, longest drive and closest to the pin.

For more information, call 725-3895 or e-mail mrzambrano@cpen.med.navy.mil.

CAMP PENDLETON			
<div><div>“SEMPER FIT”</div><div>INTRAMURAL CALENDAR 2004</div></div>			
725-6806 or 725-6614			
First Half	Meeting	Start	
Billiards Tournament	Jan. 21	Jan. 21	
Volleyball League	Jan. 22	Feb. 2	
Arm Wrestling Challenge	Jan. 28	Jan. 28	
Bowling Tournament	Feb. 2	Feb. 9	
Basketball League	Feb. 5	Feb. 18	
Darts Tournament	Feb. 25	Feb. 25	
Softball League	Mar. 3	Mar. 15	
Bike Road Race	Mar. 6	Mar. 6	
Skeet Tournament	Mar. 12	Mar. 17	
Track and Field Meet	Apr. 6	Apr. 6	
Table Tennis Tournament	Apr. 14	Apr. 14	
Devil Dog Duathlon	Apr. 24	Apr. 24	
Golf Tournament	May 5	May 17	
4 Person Beach Volleyball	May 6	May 6	
2 Person Kayak Challenge	May 13	May 13	



Hamilton finds positives in finishing fifth in Las Vegas

■ Team Marines driver leads early, falters, then makes late charge

JOHN RAIFSNIDER
FOR THE SCOUT

As strange as it sounds, Bobby Hamilton Jr. was happy to finish fifth in Saturday's Sam's Town 300 NASCAR Busch Series race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. In fact, the Team Marines driver felt fortunate to crack the top five.

An ultra-competitive driver who usually isn't happy with anything less than a win, Hamilton said by phone Sunday from his home in Tennessee that he felt Lady Luck had dealt the Team Rensi Motorsports crew a fair hand in a town known for cruel twists of fate.

"To end up where we did, compared to where we were running — I'll take a fifth," said Hamilton, who drove from 10th place into the top five over the final 15 laps of the race.

"Me and Michael (Waltrip) were definitely the class of the field at the end of the race. We were at least two- or three- tenths better than anybody else was.

"If we had another 20 more laps to run, then we would have been first and second. I don't know which of us would have won, but we would have beaten everybody else."

Hamilton was second on the starting grid and became the race leader just two laps after the green flag dropped. For the next 60 circuits, Hamilton led the field around the 1.5-mile D-shaped track. But by lap 92, Hamilton was fading and Hamilton had fallen back to seventh.

Later, Hamilton was caught in the pits as a caution flag flew on the field, putting the team one lap down to the race leaders.

"The thing that killed it for us was when we had to fight to get that lap back," Hamilton said. "If it weren't for that, we would have been fine — we probably would have won the thing."

"If we had another 20 more laps to run, then we would have been first."

Bobby Hamilton Jr.
Driver

Three of the four drivers who finished ahead of Hamilton at Las Vegas are Nextel Cup regulars, as are the three drivers he trails in the Busch Series point standings. As the season progresses, the Cup drivers will limit their appearances in Busch Series races and will fall in the standings. But none of that matters to Hamilton. "We're not even worried about where we are in the points right now," he said. "We're trying to lead laps and win races, like we did at the end of last year."

If his team can keep performing the way it has been, "with a little more luck," he'll be back in the winner's circle, he said.

"Now matter how dominating you are during the race, luck has to fall your way. That, and you can't get caught on pit road like we did and expect to win. "Our team is there, we're ready to win — we just have to have a little luck fall our way."



Bobby Hamilton Jr., who drives the No. 25 race car for Team Marines, placed fifth Saturday at Sam's Town 300 NASCAR Busch Series race at Las Vegas Speedway.

CPL.
ROBERT STORM

Softball

From Page C1

have a real good season."

One addition is the first-ever All-Star Game. Pearse plans on holding the exhibition game, which will pit the North Division against the South Division, during the middle of the regular season.

Every coach in the league will collaborate inside their respective divisions to come up with the elite squads. Pearse expects intramural teams should have two or three representatives apiece.

"We're going to do it differently than the basketball league. We're going to let the coaches in each league make their own rosters," Pearse said, referring to the first-ever All-Star Game in intramural basketball this

season. "We're going to let the coaches build the All-Star teams."

The league's restructuring excited several coaches in attendance.

"Hopefully company commanders will let their Marines come out and play," 7th Engineer Support Battalion's coach LeRoy Griffin said.

"Hopefully that will happen and we'll have a great year."

Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity assistant coach Jesse Jimenez isn't concerned about the league's numbers being cut in half. He's confident his team will be one of the contenders this season.

"We only lost two players from last year's team, and we've gotten a lot better," Jimenez said of his squad that went .500 in 2003. "I think it's going to be a fun

season."

Varsity softball tryouts

Jim Shepard, a member of the Marine Aircraft Group 39 softball squad, is coaching a new varsity softball team this season. The squad will hold a two-week tryout starting on Monday.

Shepard said he hopes to select 32-35 players for the elite squad, which will play one weekend per month. The point of this new league, which will consist of squads from Camp Pendleton, Twentynine Palms, Barstow, Miramar and Yuuma, is to keep Marines' skills sharp for West Coast Regional play, which will be held Aug. 7-13.

"This will prepare us for that, rather than just showing up the week of regionals and trying to play ball. This will keep players ready for the competition," Shepard said.

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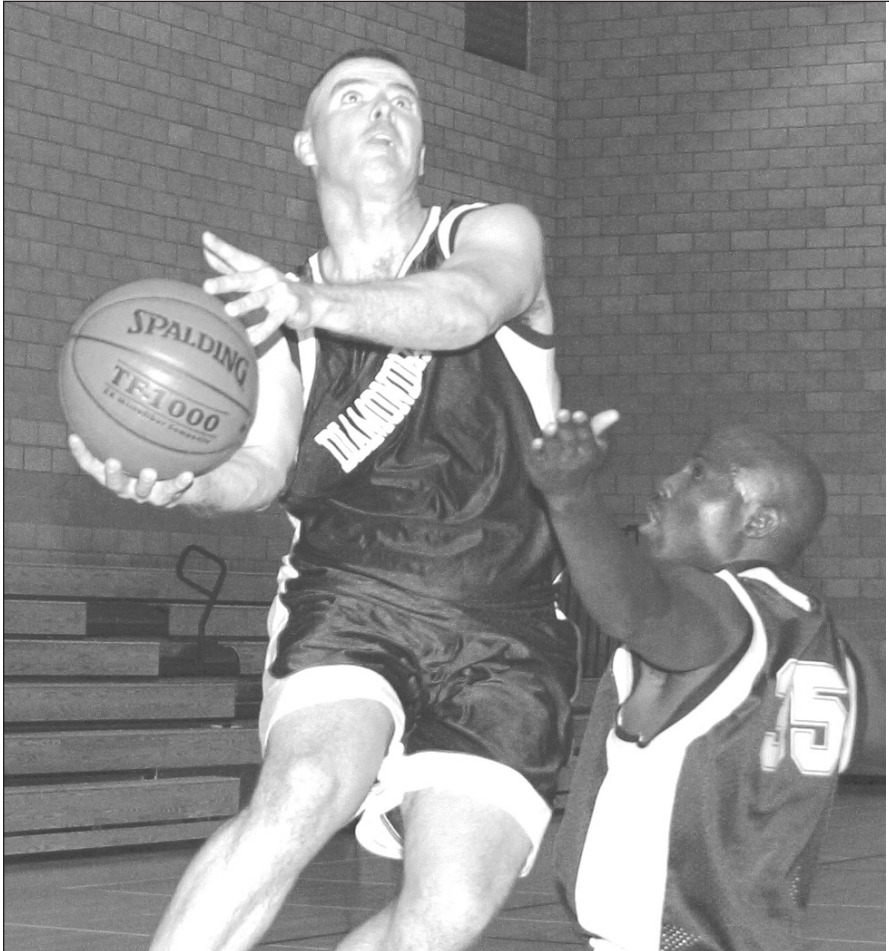
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Clinton Woods goes up for a bucket March 4 during MWSS-372's 41-32 loss to ACU-5 at the new 11 Area Fieldhouse.

WAYNE SHORT

Heartbreak

From Page C1

a cookie after their tough luck to start the season. But rather than sulk, Roedl is looking at the bright side.

"I think this was good for us," Roedl said after his team blew a five-point halftime lead March 4, falling 41-32 to the stout boys from ACU-5 at the 11 Area Semper Fit Fieldhouse.

"I think (ACU-5) is one of the top teams in the league, and we should have won the game. We've had a tough schedule, but I think we will be a contender. ... We can compete with these teams."

Much of MWSS-372's tough start has to do with the fact it started the season with perhaps the toughest schedule in the entire league. Playing league powerhouse Base and then ACU-5 — a talented group that has some serious size down low — wasn't a good way to build momentum at the start of the season.

But MWSS-372's Derrick Northington concurs with Roedl, stating his unit will be better for it in the long run.

"We know after these games, everything should be easier later (in the season)," said Northington, who had a game-high nine points to go along with eight rebounds and three steals. "I think we're playing our toughest games first."

Tough is the perfect word to describe ACU-5's style of play. The Swift Intruders employ several big, powerful, tenacious low-post players. They exploited their size advantage, eventually outmuscling MWSS-372.

But it didn't look good early. ACU-5 came out cold, missing its first 10 shots as MWSS-372 built a 7-0 lead to start the game.

With 14:18, remaining in the second half, the Swift Intruders finally took the lead when Robert Terrell completed a three-point play, giving his team a 21-20 advantage against the smaller Diamondbacks.

But MWSS-372 bit back, and the lead flopped back and forth until Terrell stepped up again with two minutes to play by draining a 3-pointer to give ACU-5 a 35-30 lead and control of the game.

"I think we had some jitters early, because this was our first game of the season," said ACU-5's Percy Whitaker, a 6-foot-4 center who grabbed 11 rebounds against MWSS-372. "Once we got warmed up, we started playing better together. ... But we can do better. We need to come ready to play. We can't just depend on our size."

FSSG dominates CSSB-12

Thanks to its stifling defense Thursday, 1st Force Service Support Group crushed Combat Service Support Brigade-12, 79-20, at the new 11 Area Semper Fit Fieldhouse. After the game, FSSG made it clear: It considers itself a contender.

"We're definitely contenders," FSSG coach Gabriel McKnight said when asked if his team has what it takes to beat Headquarters and Sup-

port Battalion, Marine Corps Base. "We need to get in shape and work on some things. But we can play with them. It's will be a good game."

Polivious Jackson, who impressed on the football gridiron last season as FSSG's starting quarterback, led all scorers with 21 points.

"I think we can play with (Base)," Jackson said. "We haven't talked about that. We don't have that mindset yet. We're just taking it one game at a time."

Player of the Week

Marine Air Logistics Squadron-39's Raymond Mason captured the first-ever Player of the Week Award, for his excellent play last week. Mason scored 56 points in his squad's two victories and currently leads the league with a 28-point-per-game average.

Fieldhouse

From Page C1

new world for the players.

"It's night and day, it really is," Crawford said when asked to compare the two facilities.

"The Pit was a dingy, grungy gym. It was like an old boxing gym, where you were so depressed all you could do was play hard. It was a great gym. ... But this gym is unbelievable."

It's probably not fair to belittle the old 13 Area site. After all, that gym was built 61 years ago. But there's no doubt intramural basketball games now have an entirely new, energized feeling in comparison to last year's games at The Pit.

"I know here, I don't have to worry about roaches," said outspoken Assault Craft Unit 5 fan Gregory Charley, who spent plenty of time at the old gym last season rooting for his Swift Intruders.

"I don't have to worry about putting my hat down and having it walk away. ... Really, this gym is so impressive. It's a great upgrade for the Marines."

And at the end of the day, that's what the new facility is all about: improving

life for Pendleton athletes. The new gym gives players a big-time basketball atmosphere for pickup games and intramural action.

"I believe this gym brings the morale up for the Marines," said All-Armed Forces basketball standout Deshaun Fields, who won last year's intramural MVP award for Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base, and seems poised for another run at the award in 2004.

"This is a better gym. It's very spacious. It makes it more fun for the players and it helps the morale."

Some of the new gym's top features are its four-sided hanging scoreboard — the equivalent of some NCAA Division I basketball teams' scoreboards — and its VIP seating, bright lights and spacious layout.

Gregory McCurtis, a former Marine, has been officiating basketball games here at Pendleton for 11 years. At first, he was worried about the placement of the hanging scoreboard. But after officiating his first game, he dismissed that concern.

"I'm pretty sure this is the No. 1 gym in the entire Marine Corps right now," McCurtis said.

After a first glance, it's hard to imagine anyone disagreeing with that statement.



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